

The Relationship Between Knowledge Management, Organizational Culture And Employee Performance In The Uae Aviation Industry

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Abstract: In today's challenging economic environment, employee performance has become a vital pillar for organizational growth and sustainability, particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors such as aviation. In the UAE aviation industry, employee performance has not yet reached the expected level, partly due to persistent challenges in managing Knowledge Management (KM) capability. Despite its importance, there is a noticeable lack of research exploring the impact of KM capability on employee performance within this sector. Additionally, limited attention has been given to the mediating role of organizational culture in this relationship, especially within the UAE context. This study aims to examine the effect of KM capability on employee performance and to investigate the mediating role of organizational culture. A quantitative research approach was employed, using structured survey questionnaires to collect data from 420 senior employees and managers across three major aviation companies in Abu Dhabi which are Global Aerospace Logistics, EDGE Group Abu Dhabi, and Etihad Engineering. Data was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that KM capability has a significant and positive effect on employee performance. Additionally, organizational culture also shows a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Importantly, the results confirm that organizational culture mediates the relationship between KM capability and employee performance. These insights provide valuable guidance for practitioners and policymakers seeking to enhance employee performance through effective knowledge management and cultural alignment.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Organizational Culture, Employee Performance, Aviation Industry

1. INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a comprehensive evaluation of how well an employee fulfills the organization's expectations regarding their duties and responsibilities (Rich et al., 2010; Kuyembek, 2020). It is an extremely important concept, directly linked to an organization's outcomes and overall success (Cahyadi et al., 2022). Optimal performance requires continuous work improvement and the effective utilization of employees' potential and resources to achieve organizational goals. Thus, it is essential for organizations to strengthen their KM capability by effectively acquiring, sharing, and applying knowledge to foster professional attitudes and actions in executing tasks within their respective roles and responsibilities (Ekaningsih et al., 2020). According to Ali et al (2019) An employee's performance significantly impacts the overall success of an organization. When employees perform well, the organization's performance and productivity are likely to improve. If the performance of employees is good, then the performance of the organization will increase. Equally, employees' bad performance can lead to decreased organizational performance (Ali et al., 2019). With organizational support in enhancing organizational culture and an adequate working environment, it can provide a better performance boost for employees, so that the organization can achieve its intended goals (Ekaningsih et al., 2020). For the organization to enhance the employee performance massive attention towards employee performance, management, and performance assessment needs to be fixed (Abou-shouk and Khalifa, 2016). Nowadays, employee performance is widely recognized as the product of capability and motivation, which are used to motivate employees to bring out the best output from them. Besides, to achieve organizational output, organizational commitment also serves as a leading factor (Soomro, 2021).

Knowledge management can be defined as the process by which the firm obtains knowledge, either from outside the company or generated internally (Alegre, 2012). It refers to the extent to which an organization understands the abilities of existing and new technologies and the level of employees' skills to use computer-based technology (Crawford et al., 2011; Edirisooriya et al., 2018; Meechang et al., 2019). KM means gaining the correct knowledge at the appropriate time and place (Suryani et al., 2020). KM facilitates the collective and systematic creation, distribution, and utilization of knowledge by individuals, teams, and entire organizations to achieve their strategic and operational goals. On one hand, KM enhances the effectiveness and performance of operations; on the other hand, it drives innovation and strengthens competitive advantage (Kumta, 2018). Knowledge-based management aims to create information knowledge and turning this expertise into a sustainable competitive advantage so that it becomes part of an organization's success (Kumta, 2018). Hence, knowledge generation is not just about generating new content, but also about replacing, validating, and updating the firm's existing knowledge (Meechang et al., 2019). In this regard, acquisition is concerned with seeking knowledge outside the organization and creating new knowledge from the interaction between new knowledge and previous knowledge in the organization (Mtega and Dulle, 2013). Knowledge acquisition refers to the ability of an organization to identify access and collect the internal and external knowledge that is necessary for its activities (Chiu and Chen, 2016). For instance, knowledge acquisition results from individual participation and interactions between tasks, technologies, resources, and people within a particular organization context.

According to Mtega and Dulle (2013), the new knowledge will benefit innovation development and organizational effectiveness. The knowledge that is externalized and captured by people who need it can increase the productivity and profitability of an organization (Mtega and Dulle, 2013). Moreover, shortage of adequate knowledge sharing and knowledge creation as well as the rapid environmental changes are also cause of unimpressive employees' performance (Mohamed et al., 2018; Alblooshi, 2021). Besides, the UAE organizations are facing critical challenges related to the formation of knowledge management due to the shortage of national skills and knowledge resources (Buafra et al., 2021). Hence, Abdulla (2018) suggested that there is a crucial need of implementing knowledge management among the UAE organizations. Hence, an effective and adoptable organizational culture has been confirmed to have positive impact toward organizations success (Samuel et al., 2017; Zhaofang et al., 2018; Saha and Saraf, 2018; Mohammad et al., 2019). However, UAE government organizations are failing to implement adoptable organizational culture which support the implementation of the information technology and knowledge sharing (Rabie, 2021; Cherian et al., 2021). An effective organizational culture improves employees' attitude, performance, productivity, and behavior (Ali Alneyadi, 2022).

Based on the literature review, existing empirical studies are often narrowly focused, with investigations primarily limited to examining direct relationships (AlShehhi et al., 2021). Furthermore, with respect to studies focused on KM and employee performance, Papa et al. (2020) examined the effects of knowledge acquisition on innovation performance and the moderating role of human resource management. However, very little concentration has been given to determining the mediating mechanism of organizational culture between KM and employee performance. Hence, there is a considerable body of research confirming the role of organizational culture in influencing employee performance (Nwakoby et al., 2019; Ekaningsih et al., 2020). Consequently, there is a significant lack of insight into the dynamics and interplay between KM capability and employee performance (Cherian et al., 2021). Specifically, there is a clear gap in the literature concerning studies that explore the mediating role of organizational culture in the relationship between KM capability and employee performance, particularly within the context of the UAE aviation industry. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by investigating the mediating role of organizational culture in the relationship between KM capability and employee performance within the UAE aviation industry.

2. The Relationship between Knowledge Management capability and Employee Performance

Knowledge management is a continuous process that outlines the framework within which employees consult one another and their superiors when they are stuck on a task, as well as how they ultimately apply this information to their work (Soto-Acosta, Popa, & Martinez-Conesa, 2018). Previous scholars have tested and confirmed the association of the knowledge management capability on organizational success (Kirby and Valdez, 2016). For example, Biswakarma (2018) investigated the extent to which selected knowledge management practices contributed to the employee job performance. The results indicate that there is a positive and significant effect of the knowledge management practices (knowledge creation and acquisition, knowledge filtering, knowledge exchange and knowledge development) on achieving long term sustainable competitive advantage of banking industry and therefore improve employee job performance (Biswakarma, 2018). Also, Mansour (2020) examined the relationships between knowledge management on employees' performance. The results showed that knowledge creation, knowledge capture and storage, knowledge sharing and knowledge application and use had a positive and significant impact on employee performance (Mansour, 2020). While prior studies have examined the relationship between KM practices and employee performance (Soto-Acosta et al., 2018; Biswakarma, 2018; Mansour, 2020); very few have explored this relationship within the context of the UAE aviation industry. Therefore, this study proposed the following research hypothesis: *H₁: There is a significant relationship between Knowledge Management capability and employee performance within the UAE aviation industry.*

3. The Relationship between Organizational Culture and employee performance

Despite the growing recognition of the role of organizational culture in shaping employee outcomes, there remains limited empirical research that examines this relationship within the context of the UAE's aviation industry an economically vital and knowledge-intensive sector (AlShehhi et al., 2021). The relationship between organizational culture and employee performance has been explored in numerous studies across different contexts (Wambugu, 2014; Körner et al., 2015; Kassem, 2016; Naranjo et al., 2016; Kassem et al., 2019; Kimberlee, 2019; Saad and Abbas, 2019; Rashid, 2020; Mara et al., 2020; Ekaningsih et al., 2020; Lau et al., 2020; Mohsen and Neyazi, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2021). For instance, Ali et al. (2019) examined how specific organizational culture behaviors affect safety performance in the UAE's oil and gas industry, revealing a positive and significant relationship. These findings were further supported by Al-Hammadi and Asma (2020). Additionally, Al Dhanhani and Abdullah (2021) investigated the effect of organizational culture and transformational leadership style on job performance in the UAE, concluding that both variables significantly influence employee performance. Accordingly, this study established the following hypothesis:

H₂: There is a significant relationship between organizational culture and employee performance within the UAE aviation industry.

4. The mediating role of Organizational Culture on the relationship between Knowledge Management and Employee Performance

Organizational culture has increasingly been recognized as a critical mechanism that shapes how strategic and knowledge-based initiatives influence organizational outcomes (AlShehhi et al., 2021). Khalifa (2021) examined how organizational culture mediates the relationship between innovation capacity and organizational performance within the UAE Department of Economic Development. The results confirmed that organizational culture plays a significant mediating role in this relationship. Similarly, Alhmoudi et al. (2021) investigated the mediating role of organizational culture in the relationship between strategic planning and organizational excellence among employees of the Fujairah Police Department in the UAE. The findings demonstrated a statistically significant mediation effect, indicating that organizational culture indeed mediates this relationship. While these studies shed light on organizational culture's mediating effects in various public sector settings, little attention has been given to its role within the knowledge management and employee performance nexus, particularly in the UAE's aviation sector. Given the sector's strategic

importance and unique operational challenges, exploring this relationship offers valuable insights that can inform both theory and practice. This study therefore responds to the need for context-specific research by examining how organizational culture influences the effect of KM capability on employee performance. Thus, the study aims to address this research gap by proposing the following research hypothesis:

H₃: Organizational culture mediates the relationship between knowledge management and Employee performance within the UAE aviation industry.

5. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 illustrates the research framework of this study, based on literature review empirical studies related to KM capability (i.e., knowledge acquisition, knowledge conversion and knowledge application) and organizational culture (i.e., adhocracy culture, market culture) and employee performance. This framework is underpinned by the theory of Resource-Based Views (RBV) and Competing Values Framework (CVF). According to RBV capabilities, competences, skills or strategic resources are the key drivers for long-term competitiveness. As these attributes are valuable, unique and not easy to substitute (Wajdi *et al.*, 2020). Capabilities consisting upon the ability to integrate and recombine useful assets. Key attributes of capabilities are appropriateness, situation relevancy and non-permanency (Wajdi *et al.*, 2020). The propositions of the CVF are to answer the question of how organizations make sense of effectiveness. In other words, the main idea of the CVF is that organizational culture is not the same but is instead a combination of competing values (Santti *et al.*, 2017).

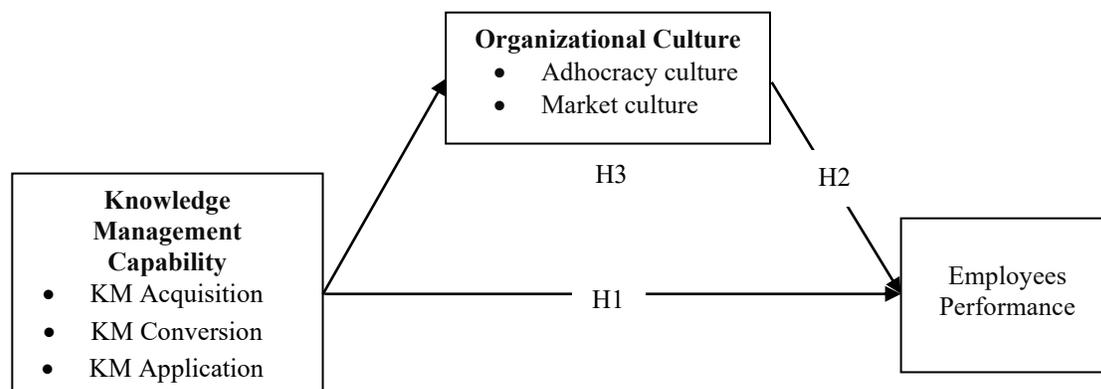


Figure 1: Proposed Research framework (Source: Authors own work)

6. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate the effect of knowledge management capability on employee performance. Additionally, the study determined the mediating role of organizational culture on the relationship between KM capability on employee performance within the UAE aviation sector. Thus, a quantitative research method based on survey questionnaire as the tool for data collection. According to Creswell (2012) research design is a set of procedures used to acquire and examine information in order to develop or establish knowledge regarding a specific topic or issue. Every research study requires a suitable and appropriate design that needs to be decided upon by the researcher. In this study, the target respondents are managerial personnel (senior employees and managers) Global Aerospace Logistics, EDGE group Abu Dhabi and Etihad Engineering. These companies were deliberately selected for their strategic significance and substantial contributions to the UAE's economic development.

6.1 Instrumentation Development

A survey questionnaire is a research instrument often designed by the researcher to identify the individual and demographic characteristics of respondents, as well as to measure the study's variables (Al Dhanhani and Abdullah (2021). In this study, the instrument was adapted from previous relevant studies (Jabeen et al., 2018). For measuring Knowledge Management (KM) capability, a total of 21 items were adopted from Alegre (2012) and Shami (2021), comprising seven items for knowledge acquisition, seven items for knowledge conversion, and seven items for knowledge application. Moreover, organizational culture was measured by the organizational culture assessment scale which was developed by Cameron and Quinn (1999) (Hazana, 2022). The organizational culture measured using two dimensions which are adhocracy culture and market culture (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). A total of 10 items were adopted from Tabouli *et al* (2016); Nam (2022); Elnagar *et al* (2022). Besides, employee performance was measured by using 10 items which was adopted from Pradhan (2018); Yuvaraj (2018); Pazetto *et al* (2022). The scale included statements related to task performance, extra-role behaviour, organizational and co-worker support, and cognitive and motivational efforts. All scale items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly disagrees' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5).

7. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The data was analyzed using partial least squares path modeling or partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Structural equation modeling allows the estimation of complex cause-effect relationships in path models with latent variables (Hair *et al.*, 2016). According to Hair *et al* (2019), PLS-SEM is suitable for studies that aim to structure a complex model and includes many constructs, indicators, and/or cause-effect interrelationship models.

7.1 Measurement model

The assessment of the measurement model evaluate the data reliability and validity (Hair *et al* 2016). The assessment includes composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and Average variance extracted (AVE). (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). The results of the convergent validity and reliability are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Constructs Reliability and Validity

Indicator	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Employee performance	0.881	0.901	0.567
Knowledge management capability	0.936	0.945	0.581
KM Acquisition	0.947	0.957	0.760
KM Application	0.934	0.946	0.717
KM Conversion	0.872	0.892	0.580
Organizational Culture	0.927	0.939	0.606
Adhocracy culture	0.879	0.912	0.674
Market culture	0.901	0.926	0.716

All measured constructs had composite reliability value greater than 0.7 and AVE scores greater than the threshold value of 0.50 indicating that convergent validity had been established (Byrne, 2013; Sarstedt et al., 2021). However, four items were removed as their factor loadings values less than 0.5. From dependent variable employee performance three items were removed, and one item was removed from Knowledge conversion, one of the dimensions of KM capability. Therefore, discriminant validity based on Heterotrait Monotrait ratio (HTMT) is presents in Table 2.

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Indicator	Employees Performance	KM Acquisition	KM Application	KM Conversion	Adhocracy culture	Market culture
Employee Performance						
KM Acquisition	0.419					
KM Application	0.441	0.758				
KM Conversion	0.403	0.413	0.330			
Adhocracy culture	0.308	0.286	0.396	0.361		
Market culture	0.383	0.477	0.482	0.621	0.832	

Discriminant validity was investigated through Hetero-trait Mono-trait (HTMT) ratio which has a recommended range of less than 0.9 (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). Results in Table 2 revealed that all the values for HTMT ratio across all latent variables are less than 0.9 indicating that correlation of indicators across the variables is less than correlations of indicators within the same latent variable. Furthermore, Table 3 shows the results Discriminant validity based on Fornell-Lacker criterion.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity based on Fornell-Lacker criterion

Indicator	Employee Performance	KM Acquisition	KM Application	KM Conversion	Adhocracy culture	Market culture
Employee Performance	0.753					
KM Acquisition	0.461	0.872				
KM Application	0.484	0.721	0.847			
KM Conversion	0.461	0.433	0.334	0.762		
Adhocracy culture	0.317	0.268	0.357	0.387	0.821	
Market culture	0.407	0.442	0.442	0.635	0.746	0.846

The matrix in Table 3 shows that for all pairwise combinations of all the latent constructs, the correlations are less than the square roots of their respective average variance extracted (AVE). Thus, discriminant validity is established. As described in an earlier, discriminant validity measures the uniqueness of latent construct with respect to other constructs in the model (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2021). Figure 2 presents the final measurement model, which includes only the reliable items retained after the removal of those that did not meet the required validity and reliability thresholds.

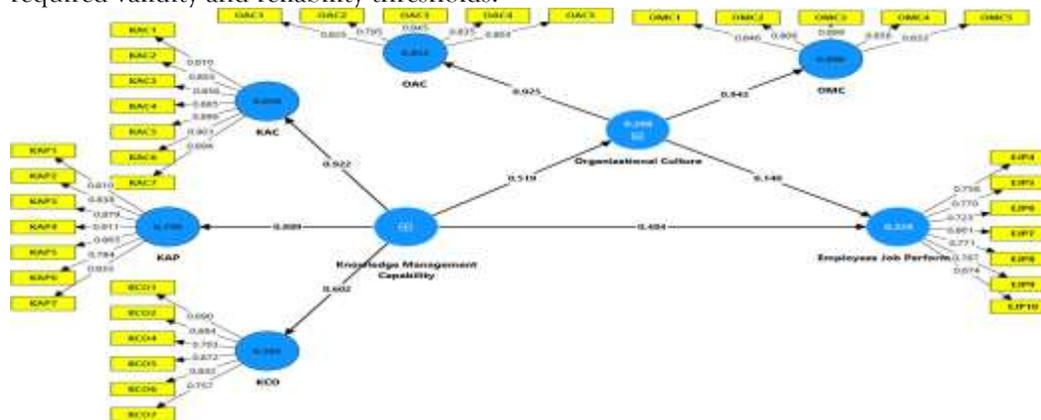


Figure 2: Measurement Model

7.2 Structural model

Structural models provide answers to the research questions and the formulated hypotheses of the study, the main goal for assessing the structural model is to determine the quality of the model in terms of its ability to explain the variance of the endogenous variables (Hair et al., 2021). Hence, the structural model is thus evaluated by assessing for collinearity issues, determining the path coefficient and its significance level, the coefficient of determination, the effect size as well as the predictive relevance of the model (Defriza et al., 2019); (Ahmed and Alhashmi, 2022). Table 4 shows the results of the direct path analysis and mediating result.

Table 4: Path coefficient, t-statistics and p-values results

Direct Hypotheses	Std β	Std Error	t-statistic	p-value	Results
Knowledge Management capability -> employee performance	0.485	0.045	10.884	0.000	Supported
Organizational culture -> employee performance	0.139	0.056	2.466	0.014	Supported
Mediating result					
Mediating hypotheses	Std β	Std Error	t-statistic	p-value	Results
Knowledge Management capability -> organizational culture -> employee performance	0.072	0.030	2.377	0.018	Mediated

The results revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between knowledge management capability and employee performance with t-values exceeding the t-critical value of 1.96 and p-values value less than 0.05. The relationship between organizational culture and employee performance is significant and positive. Therefore, the formulated research hypotheses H1 and H2 were supported. Furthermore, the mediating analysis also showed that organizational culture mediates the relationship between knowledge management capability and employee performance; thus, research hypothesis H3 is supported as shows in Table 4.

Figure 3 illustrates the structural model path diagram, depicting the relationships between items and their respective constructs (outer model) through loading factor values. Additionally, it shows the relationships between the constructs themselves (inner model) using regression coefficients, both direct and indirect. The diagram also presents the structural model coefficients of this study, along with their significance levels, as indicated by the t-statistics and path coefficient results (Hair et al., 2021).

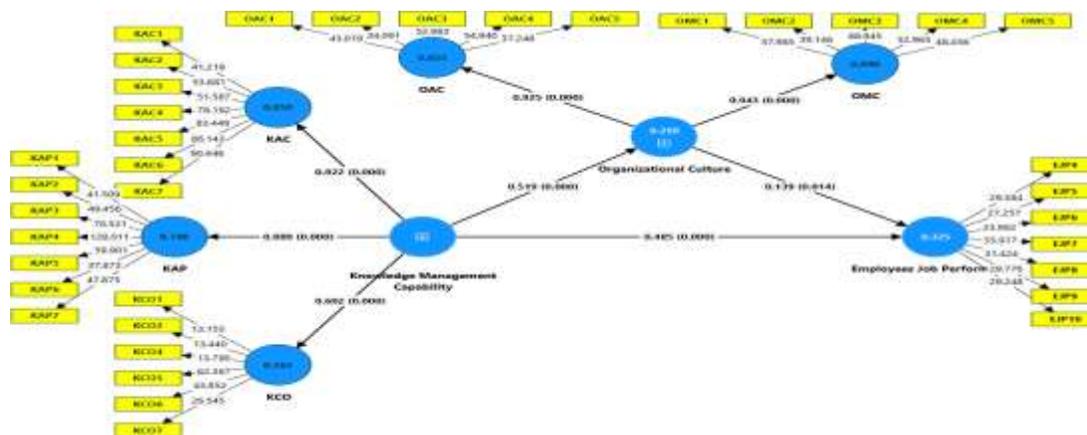


Figure 3: Structural model with t-statistics

8. DISCUSSION

The results able to confirm that there is a positive and significant relationship between KM capability and employee performance of the UAE aviation companies. This hypothesis was supported with ($\beta = 0.485$, $t = 10.884$, $p < 0.05$) which suggests that KM capability has a significant influence on employee performance. This result also supported by the past empirical studies (Jayashri & Kalaiselvi, 2018; Ha *et al.*, 2021; Castaneda *et al.*, 2018; Thang & Zhuo, 2017; Opdyke *et al.*, 2018). For instance, Biswakarma (2018) investigated the extent to which selected KM practices contributed to the employee job performance. The results indicate that there is a positive and significant effect of the KM practices (knowledge creation and acquisition, knowledge filtering, knowledge exchange and knowledge development) on achieving long term sustainable competitive advantage of banking industry and therefore improve employee job performance (Biswakarma, 2018).

In addition, the results revealed that organizational culture and employee performance is significantly and positively correlated. The hypothesis was supported with ($\beta = 0.139$, $t = 2.466$, $p < 0.05$); this implies that there is a direct significant relationship between organizational culture and employee performance. This finding is consistent with that of Al Dhanhani & Abdullah (2021) investigated the effect organizational culture on employee job performance in the UAE. The results revealed that organizational culture has a significant relationship with employee performance. Also, Noora *et al* (2021) investigated the relationship between organizational culture and the performance of organizations in the UAE. The results of the study showed a positive relationship between organizational culture and employee performance.

Regarding the mediating analysis, the results showed that organizational culture mediates the relationship between KM capability and employee performance in the UAE Aviation industry with ($\beta = 0.072$, $t = 2.377$, $p < 0.05$). The statistical analysis has been done to test H3 that suggested a mediation effect of organizational culture between knowledge management capability and employee performance. This result is in line with the finding of Shami (2021) who studied the mediating role of organization culture between knowledge management practices and employee performance. The results showed that organization culture (adhocracy, market culture) mediates the relationship between knowledge management practices (knowledge application, knowledge creation) and employee performance (employee motivation and satisfaction).

9. CONCLUSION

This study aims to enhance employee performance by examining the effect of KM capability on employee performance and investigating the mediating role of organizational culture within the UAE aviation industry. The analysis results confirmed that both KM capability and organizational culture are significantly related to improved employee performance, with organizational culture acting as a mediating factor in this relationship. Therefore, the findings of this study offer valuable insights for practitioners not only within the UAE aviation sector but also in other public organizations across developing nations. The UAE's aviation industry is one of the country's key sectors, contributing substantially to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Given this, employee job performance within the aviation sector is critically important to the nation's economic development.

10. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study focuses on a single mediating indicator organizational culture in the relationship between KM capability and employee performance. Organizational culture was measured using two dimensions of the Competing Values Framework (CVF) which are adhocracy culture and market culture. Future researchers may consider examining the mediating effect of all four CVF dimensions to validate and extend the current model through the inclusion of multiple mediators. This approach could yield deeper insights and contribute more substantially to the field of employee performance. Additionally, future studies could explore organizational culture dimensions as independent variables. The existing literature shows a limited number of studies investigating the direct effects of organizational culture within public sector organizations in the UAE context.

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